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Lina Sunseri, *Being Again of One Mind: Oneida Women and the Struggle for Decolonization* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011).

Lina Sunseri's book *Being Again of One Mind* is an eloquent blend of a personal and professional research agenda. Influenced greatly by her Oneida heritage and community, Sunseri tests our notions of mainstream theories concerning nationalism and decolonization by presenting the unique perspectives of Oneida women. Based on the interviews of roughly twenty members of the Oneida of the Thames (one of three communities that constitute the modern Oneida nation) the author's work provides material to answer questions concerning the impact of colonization on the status and power of Aboriginal women. More specifically her aim is to "examine the process of decolonization," arguing, "a decolonizing nationalist movement has the potential to restore the gender balance that existed in [the Oneida] nation prior to colonialism (2)."

This so-called "alterNative" analysis explores the Oneida colonial experience by emphasizing themes relevant to many indigenous histories. At the forefront are healing and cultural rejuvenation, bolstered by the actions of community women. For centuries Oneida women, much like other mother-centered First Nations, have held a powerful place within their society. Before European encounters women chose political leaders, called men to war and exerted authority over land and homes. This system of power was transformed in the wake of colonial regimes; yet, Sunseri demonstrates that it did not disappear entirely. Rather than focusing on the loss of power among Oneida women Sunseri gives a hopeful analysis suggesting ways in which women are able to regain their former influence and responsibilities through nationalist movements.

By drawing upon the perspectives of Oneida women, Sunseri broadens our understanding of "nation." Outside the perimeters of Eurocentric notions of nations and states, the author re-conceptualizes these social constructs in Oneida terms. Lori, one of the interviewees, for instance, describes "nation" as synonymous with Oneida, an identity that is clearly defined because they have their own language, history, territory, teaching, and forms of governance (113). Similarly, Kim, another interviewee, explains, "When I think of the word 'nation,' I think of Oneida....(119)" Through these testimonies Sunseri pushes the boundaries of national discourse to include multi-layered systems of indigenous identity. As a result, Sunseri decolonizes Oneida history by lifting the colonial cultural cloak that often skews or marginalizes indigenous ways of viewing the world. Thus, the Oneida nation is able to exist both within and outside the

more widely recognized states of Canada and the USA, without compromising its autonomy.

Indigenous notions of the relationship between motherhood and nationalism are also explored. “Mothering,” from the Oneida perspective, is more than just biological reproduction; it can include many roles such as caring for the earth and looking after the overall wellbeing of the entire community (72). This, according to the author, is “an empowering role for Oneida women, as it plays an important part in sustaining the community and the women’s achievement of self-empowerment (131).” By acknowledging their roles as “mothers of the nation” Oneida women are able to retain their traditional public responsibilities as influential decision-makers. This sets Sunseri’s work apart from most feminist critiques that present nationalism as a means to oppress women.

Despite the important contributions of Sunseri’s research, her tendency to transpose her conclusions beyond her community of Oneida of the Thames can be misleading. In light of her sources and scope (both based on Oneida of the Thames), this is not a study of the larger Oneida nation which the title seems to allude to (comprising three different communities - two of which are in the USA) but rather a more focused account of the particular colonial experiences of the Oneida of the Thames and the British/Canadian government. This detail is important and is often lost in sentences that refer to the Oneida as a whole. To imply that the same conclusions can be made for the Oneida communities in New York and Wisconsin and argue that a “decolonizing nationalist movement is empowering for them both as Oneida people and as women (173)” suggests that the experience of Oneida in the USA is the same as their Canadian counterparts. Yet, we are not given substantial evidence to corroborate this generalization. The interviewees are not from the USA and details concerning the Canadian colonial policies such as the Indian Act and Residential Schools are described, while little attention is given to American policies. With this lack of comparative methodology, questions about the differences and similarities between the communities are left unanswered.

This critique aside, *Being Again of One Mind* still delivers a viable and inspiring alterNative view on indigenous history, as well as gender and postcolonial studies. It is a welcome addition to anyone interested in understanding the complicated course of European and North American encounters from a First Nation/Oneida perspective.

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